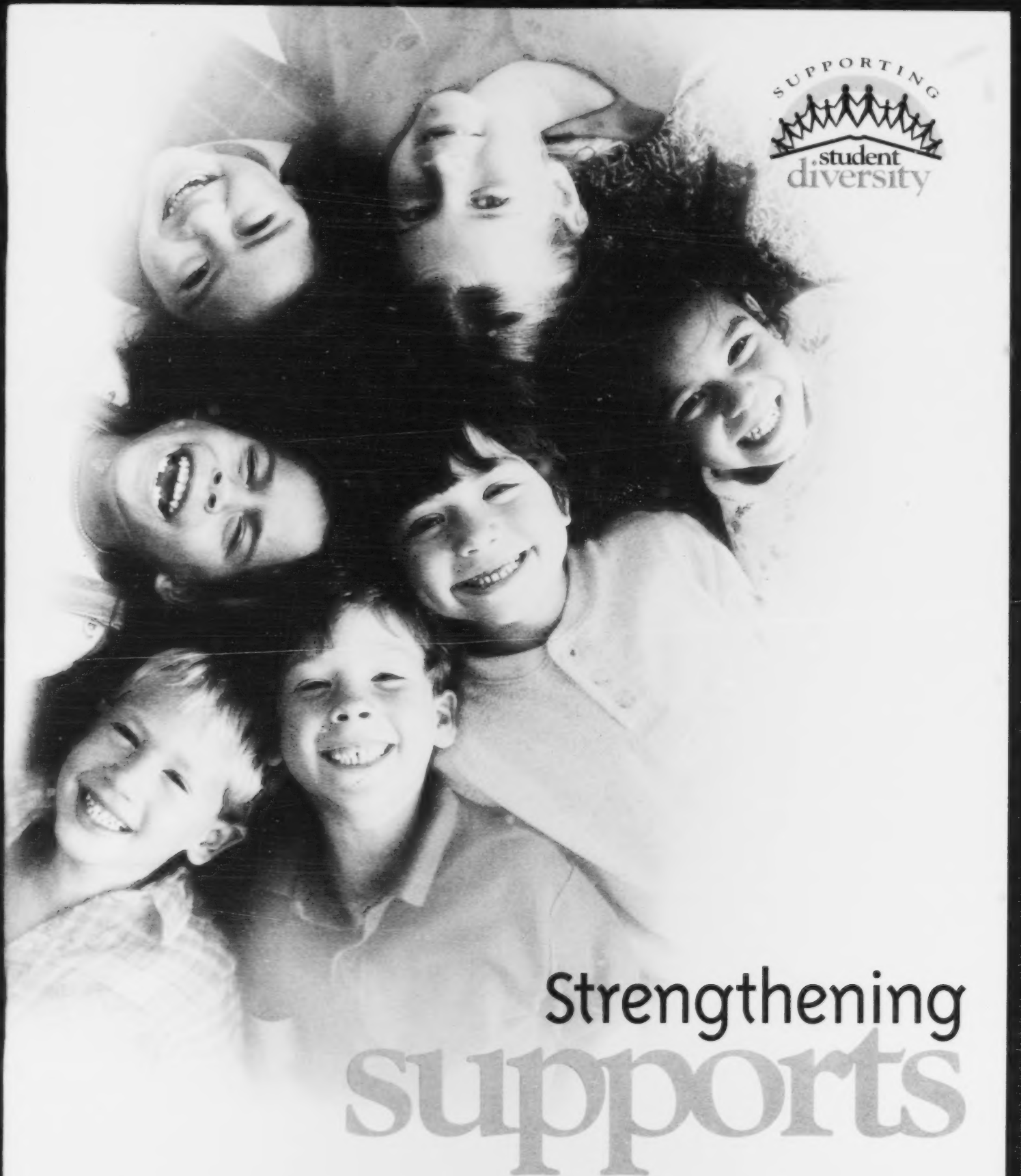

Strengthening supports

Saskatchewan Education

Minister's Response to the Report of the Special Education Review Committee

October 2000

Saskatchewan Education
ISBN # 1-894116-83-6

104-04250/

Message from the Minister

The children and young people in Saskatchewan's schools have a tremendously diverse array of abilities and strengths. When nurtured through the cooperative efforts of their families, schools and communities, their potential represents the hope for the future of our province. Just as our students have diverse abilities, so too do they have diverse needs, which must be met if they are to benefit from the learning opportunities provided and fully develop their unique potential.

Saskatchewan's education community enjoys a national and international reputation for excellence and innovation in responding effectively to the diverse needs of students. We have long recognized that in order for **all** children and young people to benefit from learning opportunities, some students require specialized supports. As the diversity of our provincial population increases, the unique needs of diverse students are gaining increased emphasis in our schools and challenging existing approaches and resources.

Recognizing the strengths of our education system and of current Special Education policy and programming, the Special Education Review was undertaken to provide direction for focused improvements. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the Special Education Review Committee for their deep commitment, insightful recommendations and significant contribution to the continued well being of children with exceptional needs. In addition, I am grateful to those parents, educators, students, administrators and other interested persons who submitted briefs and participated in the review process.

This response reflects the direction set by the Committee and those who contributed to the review process, and provides a framework for actions. Planning, developing and implementing renewed policies and programs will be carried out in close cooperation with educators, administrators, trustees, parents and students, as well as with other human service providers and community groups.

I invite all involved in Saskatchewan's education community to reflect and act upon the directions of the Special Education Review and this response. Together we will strengthen our education system and achieve the vision of full citizenship for all Saskatchewan young people as articulated by the Review Committee.

Jim Melenchuk
Minister of Education

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 1

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS – SUPPORTING THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH 4

SHARED LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY 7

Children's Services Advisory Committee 7
Policy 8
Financial Support 8
Legislation 9

PROGRAM AND DELIVERY 10

Guidelines for Effective Practices 11
Service Integration 12

REFLECTIVE PRACTICES AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT 14

Staff Development 15
School Effectiveness 15
Accountability Framework for Student Diversity 15

CONCLUSION 16

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms 17
Appendix B – Summary of Recommendations 19
Appendix C – Commonly asked Questions 23

Introduction

The Special Education Review Committee was established in September 1998 to chart the course for strengthening and renewing Special Education policy and programming. The task of the five member committee was to undertake a comprehensive review of existing Special Education programs across the province, including examining the philosophical foundations, identifying issues and concerns, and recommending improvements that would set the direction for program enhancements into the next century. The Committee submitted its report, *Directions for Diversity: Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs* to the Minister of Education in January 2000 and it was publicly released in April 2000.

The Review Committee affirmed the strengths of the current system and highlighted a number of areas for enhancement. These include:

- fully adopting and supporting the philosophy of inclusive schools;
- accelerating integrated services;
- supporting a comprehensive array of services;
- identifying effective practices and expectations for programs and services;
- increasing resources; and,
- enhancing accountability measures.

Strengthening Supports is the Minister's response to the Special Education Review. This response outlines philosophy, policy and program directions and actions for strengthening and renewing the responsiveness of the provincial education system in addressing the requirements of students with exceptional and diverse needs.

What's New or Different?

Strengthening Supports signals changes that will:

Strengthen the Philosophical Basis for Student Diversity

It enhances the philosophical perspective that emphasizes the positive and includes children with a broad range of diverse needs. It adopts the language of "diversity" and "diverse student needs" and acknowledges that diversity is to be expected and included in the overall planning cycle. It encourages a focus on the strengths of children and youth, and the provision of supports that are respectful and responsive to the needs of students.

Diversity – Within any given population, including a school population, individual members are unique with specific needs and abilities. Students can be affected by a variety of physical, social, cultural and environmental factors. These include physical, intellectual and learning disabilities, sensory impairments, social, emotional or behavioural challenges, and language delays and disorders. Aboriginal ancestry, recent immigration or learning English as a second language may also reflect a diversity of need. As well, environmental factors such as poverty, family dysfunction or transience, neglect or abuse, family alcohol or drug abuse and teenage parents can place students at risk of school failure.

Increase Resources and Direct Them Toward the Greatest Need
It outlines funding objectives that increase support for student diversity, strengthen direct supports to teachers and schools, promote shared responsibility between the local and provincial tax base, and direct incremental provincial resources toward those areas of greatest student need.

Foster Increased Local Capacity and Accountability
It strengthens the role of the professional, provides support for reflective and effective practices, and promotes the continuous improvement of programs and supports. It recognizes the critical role of family and community partnerships in ensuring effective supports.

Focus Attention on the Social and Emotional Development of Students
It promotes caring and respectful schools and enhanced efforts to nurture the social and emotional strengths of children and youth, enabling them to develop their potential and participate as full citizens.

Encourage Provision of a Comprehensive Array of Supports and Acceleration of Integrated Services and Interagency Cooperation
It reaffirms and strengthens the existing direction to provide a comprehensive array of services and supports to meet individual student needs. It promotes the need for interagency cooperation and service integration in planning and delivering supports.

Create a Children's Services Advisory Committee
It establishes a Children's Services Advisory Committee, comprised of education partners, interest groups and other human service providers, to provide a formal structure for planning, developing and implementing the actions outlined in this response.

In *Strengthening Supports*, the Minister's response is organized into the following categories:

1. Philosophical Basis – Supporting the Diverse Needs of Children and Youth
2. Shared Leadership and Responsibility
3. Program and Delivery
4. Reflective Practice and Continuous Improvement

In each section, related recommendations of the Special Education Review Committee have been grouped and summarized. (A complete list of the Committee's recommendations is available in Appendix B.) The actions outlined in this response address collections of recommendations rather than each of the 59 recommendations individually. They provide an initial plan of action, recognizing that focused efforts to ensure effective supports for students must be continuous and require ongoing monitoring and improvement.

Framework for Action

Sources of Information

- Special Education Review Committee Report
- Saskatchewan's changing demographics
- Core actualization
- Child Advocate's report on Children in Care
- Current research on effective practices
- Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children reports
- Role of Schools Dialogue
- Review of Foundation Operating Grant
- Shared Services Renewal
- Ongoing information from parents, educators and interested people
- Recommendations of stakeholder groups

What We Will Do

- Adopt philosophy of responsive, inclusive programming and environment
- Establish Children's Services Advisory Committee
- Renew/develop policy
- Enhance and refine provincial funding recognition
- Review legislation
- Develop guidelines for effective practices
- Use collaborative processes
- Identify and respond to professional development needs to support student diversity
- Support school effectiveness/improvement strategies
- Implement accountability framework

Where We Want to Go

- Enhanced family and community partnerships
- Comprehensive legislation and policy to support student diversity
- Comprehensive array of services and supports to address needs
- Child-centred individual accommodation
- Inclusive school culture and practice
- Implementation of effective practices to address student diversity
- Enhanced early intervention for preschool and school-aged children
- Supports for high-risk youth
- Integrated planning and community development
- Effective local and provincial accountability
- Responsive and flexible funding support

Philosophical Basis – Supporting the Diverse Needs of Children and Youth

"The Committee's historical review, consideration of future trends, and findings from the input of review participants offer a vision of Saskatchewan as a place where there are inclusive schools...(that) focus on meeting the individual needs of each child."

Directions for Diversity: Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs: Final Report of the Special Education Review Committee

The Special Education Review Committee's recommendations concerning the philosophical basis for supporting diverse student needs included recommendations 1, 3, 4 and 59, and centered on **supporting student diversity**. Specifically, the recommendations called for:

- a shared philosophy regarding educational supports for student diversity;
- a redefinition of the students who are to receive specialized supports to include the broad range of students with diverse needs;
- a strategy to heighten awareness among all stakeholders regarding the philosophy of providing specialized supports for students with diverse needs; and,
- an effort to create school cultures that welcome diversity.

Inclusive school principles and practices are widely recognized as the most desirable approach to fostering the long range outcome that we want our children to be able to achieve (CEC, UNESCO).

Special Education Review Committee

In response to the Special Education Review, Saskatchewan Education reaffirms the philosophy of inclusive schools. This philosophy is based on the belief that all children belong and are valued members of the community. It focuses on each child as an engaged learner, and the benefits he or she receives from educational programs that include appropriate supports and services responsive to his or her individual differences. Diversity is not perceived as an obstacle, but rather as an opportunity to enrich school culture and provide students and adults with experiences to increase their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of differences.

An inclusive school is a supportive, caring and responsive learning community in which diversity is respected and students are provided with a continuum of services and supports within the regular classroom, school and home community. The decision to provide alternate programs and services is made focusing on the best interests of the child, in consultation with the family, when it is demonstrated that classroom and school supports are not sufficient to address the child's needs.

Meeting the diverse needs of Saskatchewan children and youth is a shared responsibility in which students, families, teachers, and community members work together to help all students learn. This requires coordinated/integrated efforts and supports for and within the classroom, school and community.

Principles

Saskatchewan Education affirms the principles set forth by the Special Education Review Committee. The principles outlined in the following table will guide future work in addressing the diverse needs of Saskatchewan children and youth.

Principle	Description
Child-Centred	Children and youth are at the heart of the educational endeavour and their interests are the primary consideration in providing programs and supports.
Teacher-Focused	Teachers are central to student learning, and the teacher and the learning environment are the focus of supports to meet the diverse needs of students.
Equity and Respect for Diversity	All students are given the opportunity to experience success and to develop their skills, knowledge and attributes to their full potential.
Inclusiveness and Responsiveness	Schools and their communities welcome and expect diversity, and provide appropriate responses to meet the unique needs of each child and young person.
Cooperation and Partnerships	Programs and services are developed, supported and delivered through collaborative partnerships among educators, families, other human service providers and communities.
Community	The focus on the individual child is balanced with their development as a responsible member of the local community. A community which embraces a commitment to a common good, founded on a sense of shared responsibility for human justice and cooperation.
Holistic and Integrated Approaches	The needs of children and youth are multi-faceted and complex. A holistic array of integrated programs and services are offered to meet needs.
Prevention and Early Intervention	The needs of children and youth are anticipated and supports are offered before significant problems develop requiring major interventions.
Shared Responsibility and Accountability	Educators, families, boards of education, communities and Saskatchewan Education share responsibility for ensuring that high quality services are available to students who require them.
Quality and Excellence	Policies, programs and services reflect current knowledge of children's learning and development needs and society's expectations. Services are provided by qualified personnel who incorporate effective practices and continuously strive for improvement.

Shared Leadership and Responsibility

"Special education funding recognition has built and sustained many services. It needs to become more flexible, predictable, transparent and consistent with the cost of meeting student needs."

Directions for Diversity: Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs: Final Report of the Special Education Review Committee.

The Special Education Review Committee's recommendations related to shared leadership and responsibility included recommendations 2, 5, 6, 25 through 30, 50 through 53 and 57 concerning:

- the development of a **policy** manual consistent with the philosophy;
- the establishment of a **Children's Services Advisory Committee**;
- the development of a provincial student diversity strategy;
- **enhancing funding**, including;
  - specialized supports that reflect the philosophy;
  - protocols that reflect current needs;
  - support for integrated services;
  - discussions with stakeholders on any major changes in current funding protocols;
  - expansion of the Community Schools Program concept, including expansion to secondary schools; and,
  - a strategy to communicate provincial funding protocols;
- the meaningful involvement of parents and families; and,
- the responsibility for children with First Nations status.

In response to the Special Education Review, Saskatchewan Education will:

- establish a Children's Services Advisory Committee;
- develop policy consistent with the philosophy of supporting student diversity;
- maintain supports for student diversity as a priority and increase funding as resources are available; and,
- renew *The Education Act, 1995* and regulations to support policy direction.

Children's Services Advisory Committee

Saskatchewan Education will continue to build on the collaborative culture that exists within the education community. A Children's Services Advisory Committee will be established to facilitate close working relationships, shared planning and shared responsibility. The Advisory Committee will advise the Minister of Education on a broad range of issues related to children and youth with diverse needs and will provide leadership on the implementation of the direction and actions

recommended by the Special Education Review Committee. It will consist of representatives from community-based organizations and groups, education partners, Aboriginal organizations, government departments, and other human service agencies.

To ensure input from a cross-section of stakeholders at all levels, sub-committees will be established to focus on specific areas of concern and will include teachers, administrators, parents, trustees, representatives from community organizations, and perspectives from urban, rural and northern areas. Sub-committees will include:

- Children with Exceptional Needs;
- Integrated School-Linked Services;
- Education Health Steering Committee; and,
- others as needed.

Policy

Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the Children's Services Advisory Committee will develop comprehensive policy for supporting children and youth with diverse needs. A key objective of the policy will be to promote a broader understanding of the inherent diversity within a student population, and to focus the efforts and responses of school and other community personnel on students' abilities and strengths rather than problems and deficits.

The policy will articulate:

- a vision, principles and goals;
- guidelines for effective practices for meeting diverse needs;
- strategies for strengthening board capacity for determining program effectiveness;
- strategies to enhance family and community partnerships;
- guidelines and suggestions to assist school divisions in reviewing and enhancing local policies; and,
- the expectation that every board of education will update their Special Education Master Plan to publicly communicate how they have organized supports for students with diverse needs, effective Fall 2002.

The importance of parental involvement is recognized, valued and encouraged.

...Parents and children are supported and encouraged to participate with school-based teams in all aspects of program planning and delivery.

Special Education Review Committee

From Fall 2000 to Spring 2001, Saskatchewan Education will provide a variety of opportunities for dialogue at the local, regional and provincial levels to ensure stakeholders are involved in the development of the policy and its components.

Financial Support

In Saskatchewan, financial support for the provision of appropriate educational programs and services for students with diverse needs is a shared responsibility. Boards of education receive funds from three sources: local revenue, provincial grants determined through the Foundation Operating Grant, and tuition fees from other boards of education and First Nations.

Saskatchewan Education Funding to Support Student Diversity
Saskatchewan Special Education funding is designed to facilitate access to the curriculum, assist with the provision of appropriate programs and services, and to improve the quality of educational programming for students.

In 2000-01, Saskatchewan Education increased its funding recognition for Special Education and Community Education, through the Foundation Operating Grant by $15.5 Million. This included a substantial increase in the Designated Disabled Program, Special Needs Program and Prekindergarten Program, and the establishment of the Integrated Services funding recognition.

Saskatchewan Education will continue to place priority on supporting students with diverse needs. Changes in funding protocols are being considered to address the following objectives:

- allocate provincial resources more directly to student needs across the province;
- move funding recognition toward student need and away from student designation;
- simplify the administration of funding protocols enabling staff to focus on program development;
- identify and promote effective practices in meeting the diverse needs of students;
- provide more stable recognition and flexibility to school divisions to design programs and services to meet the unique needs of their students thereby reducing the number of requests for ad hoc funding recognition for services that fall outside the existing funding protocols; and,
- promote enhanced local accountability measures.

Saskatchewan Education will consult with school divisions on changes to the funding protocols for diverse student needs.

Legislation

Saskatchewan Education will review *The Education Act, 1995* and regulations pertaining to special education to ensure that the legislation promotes an inclusive and respectful school environment. This review of legislation will include input from a wide array of stakeholders, as well as a survey of legislation in other jurisdictions.

Program and Delivery

"Many effective practices are in place across the province. Knowledge and interpretation of effective practices need to be enhanced."

Directions for Diversity: Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs: Final Report of the Special Education Review Committee

The Special Education Review Committee's recommendations related to program and delivery include 7 through 24, 45, 56 and 58. These recommendations focussed on:

- developing provincial policy and guidelines for **effective practices**, including:
  - enhancing local plans (Special Education Master Plans) and Personal Program Plans (PPPs);
  - promoting school-based collaborative teams;
  - strengthening the implementation of Core Curriculum, including the use of the Adaptive Dimension, resource-based learning and Personal and Social Values and Skills;
  - developing a provincial policy related to social/emotional/behavioural needs;
  - developing frameworks for alternate education programs and locally modified courses at the secondary level;
  - addressing issues related to teacher associates;
  - developing prevention strategies and re-entry programs for non-attending school-aged children and youth;
  - developing a provincial strategy for the use of assistive technology; enhancing consultative supports for effective practices for emotional/social/behavioural needs;
  - developing policies and piloting early screening and early intervention programming; and,
  - lowering the pupil/teacher ratio in the early school years; and,
- enhancing **service integration**, including:
  - restructuring the shared services concept;
  - developing formal policies, protocols, funding arrangements and legislation;
  - enhancing awareness and promotion of integrated services approaches;
  - increasing leadership role of district/regional levels of education, health, social services and other human service agencies;
  - developing a model for providing health support services for children in schools;
  - developing local school division policies and procedures to enhance integrated services;
  - developing a provincial electronic information system; and,
  - increasing funding to Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children to sustain effective projects and initiate innovative interagency projects.

In response to the Special Education Review, Saskatchewan Education in cooperation with the partners in education and other stakeholders will:

- develop and promote guidelines for "effective practices"; and,
- strengthen efforts to promote service integration and expand the Shared Services Program.

Guidelines for Effective Practices

Guidelines for effective practices will be developed for responding to students with diverse needs. These guidelines will form a major component of the comprehensive policy (see page 8) and will take into account the diversity of Saskatchewan's school divisions, communities and families. They will reflect the most recent information from literature and practice and provide models, guidelines and references.

Areas to be addressed in the guidelines for effective practices include:

- caring and respectful school culture;
- assessment;
- early intervention and prevention;
- staff training and development;
- individualizing curriculum and instruction;
- cultural perspectives;
- family and community partnerships;
- community development;
- roles and responsibilities of collaborative teams;
- school effectiveness;
- transition planning, and,
- program evaluation.

The strengths of the current education system will play a large role in the development of these guidelines. Complimentary supports already underway in the department include:

Rubrics

Rubrics and other tools enabling professionals to evaluate local programs and services are currently being researched and discussed with advisory groups such as the Community Schools Working Group. These tools will be collaboratively developed to assist boards of education, school teams and teachers in assessing the quality and effectiveness of programs and services, planning improvements, and reporting on progress.

Caring and Respectful Schools Initiative

Saskatchewan Education has launched the *Caring and Respectful Schools Initiative* to focus attention on the development of young people's social and behavioural skills and to assist schools to create caring and respectful learning environments. This initiative builds on the existing work of many Saskatchewan teachers, trustees and administrators.

Components of the initiative will include: attending to the development of the school culture, climate and relationships; identifying curriculum resources to teach responsibility and caring for others; identifying effective prevention strategies; processes for creating a school-wide discipline policy; and outlining strategies for dealing with harassment, bullying, aggression and violence.

Rubrics

A rubric is a printed set of guidelines/ criteria that distinguishes performances or products of different quality. A rubric has descriptors that define what to look for at each level of performance and indicators that provide specific examples or things to look for in the work or program. Rubrics are often used in assessing student achievement and communicating expectations but can also be used to assist organizations to assess programs and services.

Early Intervention
In the 2000-2001 budget, Saskatchewan Education provided additional supports for programming for preschoolers with disabilities and Prekindergarten programming for children at risk. As resources become available Saskatchewan Education will expand early intervention programming for vulnerable children, including the Prekindergarten Program.

Saskatchewan Education will continue to work with other government departments to implement the provincial **Early Childhood Development Strategy**. This will include early screening and intervention with the long-range goal being the provision of comprehensive, consistent province-wide supports.

Alternative Education Grade 10, 11 & 12 Program Resources
In collaboration with teachers and school divisions, Saskatchewan Education will identify resources and examples to assist in the development and implementation of Alternative Education Grade 10, 11 and 12 Programs. These sample programs and resources will be made available on the Saskatchewan Education web site.

Service Integration

Respondents suggested that ultimately there needs to be more government guidance around integrated services – a blueprint or master plan outlining interagency roles, responsibilities, and how funding will be provided.

Special Education Review Committee

Saskatchewan Education has been a strong promoter of integrated services and will continue to provide assistance through a variety of mechanisms. This includes providing financial and developmental support to school divisions, participating in Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children and collaborating with other government departments.

Saskatchewan Education recently introduced two initiatives to promote service integration – the Shared Services Review and funding for integrated services initiatives.

Shared Services Review
In 1998 and 1999, Saskatchewan Education reviewed the Shared Services Program, which assists rural school divisions to share professionals such as speech language pathologists and educational psychologists. In March 2000, the Department announced its intention to enhance Shared Services. Saskatchewan Education will consult with school divisions and government departments during 2000 to determine the Shared Services regions, mechanisms for partnering with other human service providers and effective management boards.

Funding for Integrated Services

In 2000-01, funding was allocated to support integrated services initiatives. This funding builds upon the policy direction outlined in *Working Together to Address Barriers to Learning: Integrated School-Linked Services for Children and Youth At Risk*. It provides support to school divisions enabling them to work together with other human services providers and communities to address the needs of children and youth facing multiple risk factors.

Saskatchewan Education, in reflection of the Government's commitment to human services integration, will continue to collaborate with the Departments of Health; Justice; Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing; Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training; and Social Services through both the Human Services Integration Forum and the nine Regional Intersectoral Committees. The Regional Intersectoral Committees provide a vehicle for school divisions to work with other human service providers to ensure more holistic responses to special needs families. The Department believes that the leadership and the actions generated by these collaborative initiatives are essential to create long-term solutions that meet the diverse needs of all Saskatchewan children and youth.

Reflective Practices and Continuous Improvement

"There has been a steady growth of preparation and professional development in knowledge and skills over the years. There is a need to continue to enhance and renew preservice and inservice preparation."

Directions for Diversity: Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs: Final Report of the Special Education Review Committee

The Committee's recommendations related to reflective practices and continuous improvement include 38 through 44, 46 through 49, 54 , and 55 and 31 through 35. These recommendations focussed on:

- **professional development** opportunities, including:
  - a review of preservice preparation and inservice opportunities to include effective practices, Adaptive Dimension, classroom management, practicum opportunities and evolving roles of educators;
  - alternate forms of delivery for university courses related to meeting the diverse needs of students;
  - increased priority on funding professional development opportunities for educators and paraprofessionals;
  - a study of the issue of recruitment and retention of qualified educators;
  - a module for administrators on effective practices;
  - enhancement of supports for increasing knowledge and skills, such as:
    - enhancing Saskatchewan Education's web site; and,
    - enhancing the use of SCN and other media for high priority topics;
  - implementation of a bursary program for needed professionals; and,
  - keeping the staff of Saskatchewan Education and the members of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents and Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation current in the area of students with diverse needs;
- **school improvement and effectiveness models**;
- **accountability mechanisms** and guidelines, including:
  - alignment with the guidelines for effective practices;
  - enhanced local accountability;
  - mechanism to review instances of non-adherence with effective practices;
  - articulation of local plans by boards of education for families and community members; and,
  - inclusion of supports for students with diverse needs in the Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report.

In response to the Special Education Review, Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with the educational partners and other stakeholder groups, will:

- increase staff development opportunities;
- enhance supports for school improvement/effectiveness strategies; and,
- develop an accountability framework for student diversity programming.

Staff Development

Saskatchewan Education will actively promote and facilitate the knowledge and skills needed by professionals and paraprofessionals in all areas of special education. Working with the education partners, the department will plan and implement strategies for strengthening preservice and inservice training and development opportunities.

School Effectiveness

Saskatchewan Education will renew efforts to facilitate the adoption of school effectiveness (school improvement) strategies across the province, including the production of a support handbook. The handbook will provide current information and research to assist schools in creating dynamic mechanisms for shared planning, program assessment, team building and continuous renewal.

Accountability Framework for Student Diversity

Saskatchewan Education in cooperation with the education partners, will develop and implement a new accountability framework for ensuring high quality, effective programs and services. Based on the understanding that the purpose of assessment and accountability measures is to inform program improvement and report on progress and effectiveness, the objectives of this framework will be to:

- promote effective practices and strengthen services and supports in meeting the diverse needs of children and youth;
- strengthen the capacity for program assessment, continuous improvement and public reporting at the local level;
- simplify and reduce data collection processes related to program inputs, freeing division and department staff to focus on program development, effectiveness and improvement; and,
- enhance the involvement of parents and family members, as well as other service providers in program planning, delivery and evaluation.

The purpose of accountability measures should be to provide continuous feedback (for program improvement) and report progress to families, community members, and students, and not the policing of regulations.

Special Education Review Committee

Elements of Accountability Framework

The new accountability framework will include the following elements:

- effective practices;
- core set of performance indicators with rubrics;
- annual school division plan to support student diversity (renewal of the Special Education Master Plan); including a public report every three years; and,
- program audits (when necessary).

Conclusion

In accepting the recommendations of the Special Education Review, Saskatchewan Education is committed to providing direction for focused improvements to an already strong and responsive education system – an education system that believes in equity of opportunity and benefit for all students and provides the necessary programs and supports for each child and young person to experience success.

Building on the tradition of cooperation and partnership, which is foundational to Saskatchewan's K-12 education system, the Children's Services Advisory Committee will provide a permanent vehicle to directly involve education partners, community based organizations and key interest groups in implementing the actions articulated in this response. Working together, the department will lead the development of enhanced policy and programs to focus and strengthen supports for students with diverse needs.

The Report of the Special Education Review Committee and this response represent the first step in an ongoing process of cooperation, innovation and continuous improvement. It invites parents, advocates and educators to strengthen their commitment and work together to ensure that programs and services are responsive, holistic and effective in supporting the diverse needs of Saskatchewan children and young people.

Appendix A - Glossary of Terms

Accountability – The education system is responsible to its various publics for the decisions that are made within it. It displays leadership, promotes planned change and works cooperatively. Accountability and assessment measures are designed to inform program improvement and report on progress and effectiveness.

At-Risk – Children and youth "at risk" are those who are likely to fail – either in school or in life – due to social and economic conditions that are barriers to their healthy development and learning. Barriers or factors that place children at risk include such things as poverty, family dysfunction or transience, abuse or neglect, family drug or alcohol abuse, and teenage parents or adolescent pregnancy. Normally the existence of one risk factor, such as poverty, does not place a child at risk. However, risk factors tend to be present in clusters. For example, alcoholism and family dysfunction are often present with family poverty. These clusters can and often do negatively impact upon a child's well being and degree of success.

The multiple effect of these risk factors has been documented. "One risk factor is no more likely than zero risk factor to predict difficulty. However, if two or three risk factors are present, the chances for an unfavourable outcome increase four times. With four risk factors the chances of a negative outcome are increased ten times."
(Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (1996). *Successful Services for Our Children and Families at Risk*. Paris, France: Author.)

Community Education – Community education is an educational philosophy and process based on community development and life-long learning. It believes that collaboration and the involvement of families, community members, organizations, teachers and students in problem solving and decision making will lead to a more meaningful and successful school experience for students.

Community Schools – Community Schools are founded upon the tradition of community education, which in turn has its roots in community development. Community Schools build strong relationships with their community members and organizations and work closely with families. These close ties serve to improve educational opportunities and programs, and strengthen the communities in which the schools are located.

In this province, the formal title of Community School is given to those schools designated by Saskatchewan Education's Community Schools Program. However, to address the needs of at-risk populations, a number of schools throughout the province have adopted the Community Schools model.

	Recommendation	Responsibility
52	That schools enhance meaningful involvement of parents and guardians as partners on school-based collaborative teams.	Schools
53	That boards of education inform parents about policies and procedures within the school division, including the process for review of decisions.	Boards of Education
57	That the Saskatchewan Government work toward development of a clear understanding of responsibility for children with First Nations status.	Government of Saskatchewan
Financial Support		
25	That Saskatchewan Education increase funding to ensure that specialized supports are available to reflect Saskatchewan's vision and philosophy related to students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education
26	That Saskatchewan Education adopt provincial funding protocols that reflect current needs and that support the philosophy.	Sask. Education
27	That the Saskatchewan Government increase funding to integrated school-linked services for the purpose of accelerating the development of interagency supports to meet the diverse needs of children and youth.	Government of Saskatchewan
28	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, undertake a process of discussion prior to major changes in funding protocols.	Sask. Education Education Partners
29	That Saskatchewan Education expand the Community School Program concept to expeditiously recognize more schools, including secondary schools, throughout the province.	Sask. Education
30	That Saskatchewan Education develop a strategy to communicate the provincial funding protocol.	Sask. Education

3. Program and Delivery

	Recommendation	Responsibility
Effective Practices		
7	That Saskatchewan Education develop policy and guidelines for "Effective Practices to Support Students with Diverse Needs".	Sask. Education
8	That boards of education, in collaboration with local stakeholders, undertake an enhancement to the local plan, currently referred to as the Special Education Master Plan.	Boards of Education Local Stakeholders
9	That the Children's Services Advisory Committee direct a strategy to enhance and promote school-based collaborative teams.	Children's Services Advisory Committee
10	That the Children's Services Advisory Committee direct a strategy to enhance use of PPPs as an ongoing process and as a mechanism for accountability.	Children's Services Advisory Committee
11	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners, through Core Curriculum Actualization, assist with renewal and implementation of the Adaptive Dimension.	Sask. Education Education Partners
12	That Saskatchewan Education, through Core Curriculum Actualization, promote an effective vision for the implementation of the Common Essential Learning of "Personal and Social Values and Skills".	Sask. Education
13	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners and government human services departments, develop a provincial policy related to the social/emotional/behavioural needs of students.	Sask. Education Education Partners Government Human Service Departments
14	That Saskatchewan Education develop, for the secondary school level, frameworks for alternate education programs and locally modified courses, and identify accompanying resources.	Sask. Education

	Recommendation	Responsibility
15	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, identify and address issues related to teacher associates.	Sask. Education Education Partners
16	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners examine the issue of non-attending school aged students and develop prevention strategies and re-entry programs for these children and youth.	Sask. Education Education Partners
17	That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with government and non-government agencies, develop and implement a provincial strategy for the use of assistive technology.	Sask. Education
36	That the Government of Saskatchewan develop policy to support the provision of early screening and intervention.	Government of Saskatchewan
37	That the Government of Saskatchewan develop and pilot an early screening and intervention model	Government of Saskatchewan
45	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with boards of education, enhance consultation support for effective practices for emotional, social, and behavioural needs.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
56	That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education implement policy that moves enrolments toward lower levels in the early school years.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
58	That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education continue to promote and enhance resource-based learning and instructional strategies through Core Curriculum Actualization.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
Service Integration		
18	That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with the education partners, restructure the shared services concept.	Sask. Education
19	That the Government of Saskatchewan develop formal legislation, policy, protocol, and funding arrangements among human services departments.	Government of Saskatchewan
20	That the District and/or Regional levels of Health, Education, Social Services, and other human services agencies take a lead role in enhancing awareness and promotion of the integrated services approach.	Government Human Services Agencies
21	That Saskatchewan Education and Health develop a model for providing health support services to children in schools.	Sask. Education Sask. Health
22	That boards of education develop policy and procedures within their local plan to enhance integrated service provision at the school division and school levels.	Boards of Education
23	That Saskatchewan Education, in partnership with boards of education, develop a provincial electronic information system that follows all children and youth.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
24	That the Government of Saskatchewan increase funding for the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children to sustain effective projects and initiate innovative interagency projects.	Government of Saskatchewan

4. Reflective Practices and Continuous Improvement

	Recommendation	Responsibility
Accountability		
31	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop accountability mechanisms and guidelines that are aligned with the recommended funding protocols and effective practices.	Sask. Education Education Partners
32	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, develop a mechanism to review instances of non-adherence with the effective practices and, if necessary, recommend consequences.	Sask. Education Education Partners
33	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop a strategy to enhance local accountability, including a framework of effective practices to support students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education Education Partners

	Recommendation	Responsibility
34	That boards of education articulate for parents and community members their local plan to provide supports for student diversity.	Boards of Education
35	That Saskatchewan Education provincial profiles in the Education Indicators Report include the supports to students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education
Professional Development		
38	That provincial Colleges of Education and the education partners collaborate to review preservice preparation and inservice opportunities for all classroom teachers in the areas of effective practices for meeting diverse student needs, the Adaptive Dimension, classroom management, and the evolving role of special educators.	Colleges of Education Education Partners
39	That provincial Colleges of Education, in collaboration with the education partners, review preservice and inservice opportunities for special education teachers to ensure that they receive the experiences they require to fulfill their changing role.	Colleges of Education Education Partners
40	That provincial Colleges of Education, in consultation with the education partners, develop alternate forms of delivery for university courses related to meeting the diverse needs of students.	Colleges of Education Education Partners
41	That boards of education, supported by Saskatchewan Education, place a high priority on funding conference and workshop attendance, leaves, bursaries, and scholarships to support professional educators and paraprofessionals in developing and enhancing their philosophical perspective, knowledge, and skills regarding the design and implementation of effective practices.	Boards of Education Sask. Education
42	That the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Board of Teacher Education and Certification study the issue of recruitment and retention of qualified special education teachers and share recommendations with Saskatchewan Education and the education partners.	STF Board of Teacher Education and Certification
43	That the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit and the education partners develop a module for educational administrators on effective practices for meeting the needs of students with diversity in the schools.	SPDU Education Partners
44	That Saskatchewan Education enhance the special education area of the web site.	Sask. Education
46	That Saskatchewan Education enhance the use of SCN and other media for high priority topics.	Sask. Education
47	That Saskatchewan Education, Social Services, and Health implement a bursary program for needed professionals to serve children and youth with diverse needs such as special education resource teachers, speech and language pathologists, OT/PT, mental health workers, and other high priority areas (e.g., behaviour consultants) as needs emerge.	Sask. Education Sask. Social Services Sask. Health
48	That Saskatchewan Education place a high priority on professional development for all staff of the Planning, Evaluation, and Children's Services Branch.	Sask. Education
49	That Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation play a lead role in keeping their members current in the area of students with diverse needs.	SSTA LEADS STF
School Effectiveness		
54	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners promote school improvement and effectiveness models as adjuncts to the inclusive schools approach recommended in this report.	Sask. Education Education Partners Boards of Education
55	That Saskatchewan Education, the education partners, and boards of education review and apply the most recent models and processes of change.	Sask. Education Boards of Education

Appendix C - Commonly asked Questions

1. **Why should we have students with diverse needs in our regular classrooms when they take so much away from our regular students?**

   A fundamental belief in Saskatchewan is that all individuals should have equal access to and benefit from educational programming and services.

   It is not a matter of taking away resources from one group of students in order to meet the needs of another group. All students benefit from the additional resources and educators' increased knowledge of a wide variety of instructional approaches and accommodations that are available to match the learning needs of students. In addition, students have the opportunity to acquire positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and develop an appreciation for diversity within society.

   In order for some students to have equal benefit, additional resources are required to enable them to reach their potential.

2. **Is special education going to receive increased and sustained financial support?**

   In 2000-2001, Saskatchewan increased the Foundation Operating Grant recognition for Special Education and Community Education by $15.5 million. Saskatchewan Education will continue to place priority on funding for programs and services that address diverse student needs. Primary funding objectives include allocating provincial resources more directly to accommodate student needs across the province and providing more stability and flexibility to school divisions to meet local needs.

3. **What is the point of having students with severe disabilities in our regular classrooms when they are unable to learn from the regular curriculum?**

   Students with severe disabilities require individualized programs and supports to benefit from instruction and learning activities within regular classrooms. Extensive research has shown that when students with severe disabilities are part of the regular classroom, and have appropriate supports to meet their needs, they achieve increased benefit from their education. This includes benefits in language and communication, social development, and functional academics. In addition, benefits to other students also occur. On the other hand, data that supports removing students from their regular classroom is limited.

4. How will the education system respond to the growing number of students with behaviour problems?

In 2000-01, Saskatchewan Education provided funding for integrated services initiatives as a means of assisting school divisions, in partnership with other government departments and local organizations, to address the needs of children and youth at risk. One of the target groups of this program is children and youth with social, emotional or behaviour problems.

Saskatchewan Education is launching a Caring and Respectful Schools Initiative.

Saskatchewan Education is launching a Caring and Respectful Schools Initiative. Components of the initiative will include: processes for developing school-wide discipline policies; identification of effective prevention strategies; and outlining strategies for dealing with harassment, bullying, aggression and violence.

5. When will the policy manual be available?

The policy manual is expected to be finalized in the Spring of 2001 and distributed to schools in Autumn 2001.

6. How will teachers be involved in the development of policy and practice?

Beginning in Autumn 2000, Saskatchewan Education will be coordinating a variety of opportunities for teachers, as well as other school staff, administrators, trustees and parents, to be involved in the development of policy, guidelines for effective practices, and an accountability framework.